

Unitarian Church  
Burlington, Vermont

HABS No. VT-24

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Vermont

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Arthur H. Smith, District Officer  
Cryphon Bldg., Rutland, Vt.

UNITARIAN CHURCH  
Burlington, Chittenden County, Vermont

OWNER Unitarian Church Society. 1 -

DATE OF ERECTION 1816

BUILDER Unknown

ARCHITECT Unknown

PRESENT CONDITION This building is in very good condition at present. All chimneys are built in the walls of building. Church parlors in back part of building are not original. In 1872 the handsome mahogany pulpit was taken down to be replaced by the present one built of black walnut.

NUMBER OF STORIES

two

MATERIAL OF CON-  
STRUCTION

Foundation	Red stone
Floors	Wood
Exterior Walls	Brick
Interior Walls	Lath and plaster
Steeple	Wood and copper
Roof	Slate
Steps	Wood
Pulpit	Black Walnut

OTHER EXISTING RE-  
CORDS

We could not learn of any.  
The information used in this history was secured from a book entitled, "The History of Burlington".

UNITARIAN CHURCH  
Burlington, VermontVT.  
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1-Descriptive Data

At a meeting of the Society held April 22, 1815, it was voted to build a meeting house on the five acre lot, No. 17, which was deeded by Chauncey Langdon to Horace Loomis and E. T. Englesby the autumn previous for \$1,000.00 and this was tied up so that it could never be used for anything but religious purposes. The money was subscribed by the gentlemen with seven others who each give \$100.00, Luther Loomis, E. H. Denning, John Howard, John Pomeroy, John Peck, L. Tousey, and Gideon King. A later subscription added many more names and yet when the whole cost was estimated, about \$23,000.00, there still remained a deficit. A conference of those interested and generous founders, John Pomeroy, E. T. Englesby, and Horace Loomis, held at the house of the latter resulted in the pledging of the balance, so that these three gentlemen contributed \$10,000.00.

As we consider the building itself we find the trimmings were white and the blinds green, and there were three separate vestibules leading to the three aisles. The gallery pillars reached to the roof which was flat from the outside walls while the centre was a round arch. Each pew had a seat across the end as well as across the back and the floors were about three

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inches higher than the floor of the aisles. The mahogany pulpit stood on high pillars and was reached by winding stairs on each side with doors at the top. The pulpit and also a large false window were draped in red satin damask.

Of the original pew owners, two are now represented by descendants in the church, George Moore and John Van Sicklen as also Mr. Nathan Haswell who, though not a pew owner, was an active worker.

About twenty-five years later the present ceiling was built, the pulpit and the galleries lowered, the three vestibules were thrown into one, and the notice in the southeast corner, "For colored People", was removed. While Mr. Peabody was minister, the sexton's house on Elmwood Avenue was built, a new organ was put in and also a new clock. It was then too, that our present Grant Street was opened; and it was voted that the church lands could be leased.

At the close of Mr. Young's pastorate the present organ was installed, said then to be the finest in the country.

In the 60's the ladies of the Church worked on points which were sold in New York by Mrs. Alfred Brookes.

The Sociables were held at private houses where the hostess had to borrow chairs, dishes, lamps, etc.,

and also furnish the entire supper. The funds for which the ladies were working grew, however, and in 1868 the present Sunday School room and parlors were completed; though the rooms were used earlier, the chapel was dedicated the last evening of the year.

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In 1872 the pews were replaced by upholstered seats, the handsome mahogany pulpit was taken down to be replaced by one of black walnut, and a large chandelier of seventy-two lights was hung from the center of the ceiling. The seating capacity was increased to 112 pews.

The spirit of improvement seemed to urge on to greater works, for we find the parlors thrown into each other, as now, in 1883, the dining room enlarged to seat 180 and equiped with electric lights in 1889, and finally in 1892, fresh carpets for the Church, a mahogany pulpit given by Unity, and the iron grill work back of the pulpit.

It was then, too, that the stained glass windows were presented to the Church by Mr. William Loomis in memory of his father and mother, Henry and Julia Loomis. Long may they shed their subdued light as reminders of two noble souls.

From the time when those three men gathered at the house of Horace Loomis and there pledged a sum for the new building even through the century, the name of Loomis has ever stood for an active interest in the Church and its affairs.

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To those who knew the man the name of Henry Loomis means generosity, rectitude, and unfailing devotion to Church interests. Mr. Loomis gave the minister the inspiration of his regular attendance, and he stood back of the best interests of the people. From the weightier matters of Church finances down even to the useless articles at Church Fairs,--for all these his purse was ever open. At his hospitable table newcomers in the church were made to feel at home and to know the friendliness of genuine simplicity.

But perhaps even more characteristic of the man were his hidden deeds of kindness, for his left hand knew not what his right hand did. Whether he left a substantial sum with poor Bridget or paid College expenses for those less fortunate,--these were but types of his generous service for others. The Church was the stronger for the life and work of this one man.

With the close of the century we find ourselves too near the present time for a fair prespective and again we leave to others the report of what the last twenty years and more have added to the rich heritage of the past.

Approved Arthur H. Smith.  
District Officer.

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ADDENDUM TO:  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY CHURCH  
(Unitarian Church)  
Pearl Street & Elmwood Avenue  
Burlington  
Chittenden County  
Vermont

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001